



Aruba's Chamber of Commerce is in accord with a building moratorium

On Tuesday, May 29, the administrators of Aruba's Kamer van Koophandel (KvK) held one of their regularly scheduled "Meet the Press" functions to address a number of issues or announce events concerning the business community of Aruba.

The first topic presented by President of the KvK, Edwin Roos and Director Lorraine de Sousa was the declaration of a moratorium regarding hotels, condominium and timeshare resorts as of the year 2010. Mr. Roos asserted that the KvK has long been a supporter of a moratorium in the field of tourism construction, and that enacting such would be of definite benefit to the Aruba.

Studies by the KvK reveal that with all planned resorts completed by 2010, Aruba will see a jump from 8000 hotel rooms to 12,000. They remind officials and entrepreneurs that tourism is an extremely "labor intensive" form of commerce, and that the influx of immigrants to the island to staff these resorts may outdistance Aruba's ability to accommodate and integrate them into the culture. Aruba's infrastructure of social services, educational and health facilities, law enforcement and living accommodations may simply not be able to handle such a tide of increased population, aside from the proper investigation and processing of individuals before awarding residency and work permits. The impact on the physical environment of the island is also a consideration.

A recent census revealed that since Aruba received "Status Aparte" twenty years ago, the population has increased from 59,444 residents to 103,484, nearly double. An additional increase of hotel rooms by 50% will certainly create a demand for labor that official agencies will be hard-put to process.

As hotels occupy beachfront, building pool decks that restrict access from island residents, Arubans will also lose more and more of their traditionally public beach areas. Despite the rule that all beaches are public, and no resort has the right to keep an Aruban from using any beach; this can sometimes create tension.

Mr. Roos and Ms. De Sousa summed up the position of the KvK as feeling that the government's proposal of a moratorium is necessary, as the consideration and attempt to develop all the other aspects of infrastructure for accommodating the needed labor force may be at this time "Too little, too late."